

We are Unitarian Universalists

by Marta Flanagan

Are you looking for a religious home?

Unitarian Universalists say:

"I want a religion that respects the differences between people and affirms every person as an individual."

"I want a church that values children, that welcomes them on their own terms—a church they are eager to attend on Sunday morning."

"I want a congregation that cherishes freedom and encourages open dialogue on questions of faith, one in which it is okay to change your mind."

"I want a religious community that affirms spiritual exploration and reason as ways of finding truth."

"I want a church that acts locally and thinks globally on the great issues of our time—world peace; women's rights; racial justice; homelessness; gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender rights; and protection of the environment."

What We Believe

Unitarian Universalism is a liberal religion born of the Jewish and Christian traditions. We keep our minds open to the religious questions people have struggled with in all times and places.

We believe that personal experience, conscience, and reason should be the final authorities in religion. In the end religious authority lies not in a book, person, or institution, but in ourselves. We put religious insights to the test of our hearts and minds.

We uphold the free search for truth. We will not be bound by a statement of belief. We do not ask anyone to subscribe to a creed. We say ours is a noncreedal religion. Ours is a free faith.

We believe that religious wisdom is ever changing. Human understanding of life and death, the world and its mysteries, is never final. Revelation is continuous. We celebrate unfolding truths known to teachers, prophets, and sages throughout the ages.

We affirm the worth of all women and men. We believe people should be encouraged to think for themselves. We know people differ in their opinions and lifestyles, and we believe these differences generally should be honored.

We seek to act as a moral force in the world, believing that ethical living is the supreme witness of religion. The here and now and the effects our actions will have on future generations deeply concern us. We know that our relationships with one another, with diverse peoples, races, and nations, should be governed by justice, equity, and compassion.

We Celebrate

Each Unitarian Universalist congregation is involved in many kinds of programs. Worship is held regularly, the insights of the past and present are shared with those who will create the future, service to the community is undertaken, and friendships are made. A visitor to a Unitarian Universalist congregation will very likely find events and activities such as church school, daycare centers, lectures and forums, support groups, family events, adult education classes, and study groups—all depending on the needs and interests of the local members.

Each Unitarian Universalist congregation is the fulfillment of a long heritage that goes back hundreds of years to courageous people who struggled for freedom in thought and faith. On this continent we include the Massachusetts settlers and the founders of the republic. [Outstanding Unitarians and Universalists](#) include John Adams, Clara Barton, Oliver Wendell Holmes, Louisa May Alcott, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Susan B. Anthony, Adlai Stevenson, Eliot Richardson, and Whitney Young. Not as famous but equally worthy are the thousands of men and women in our congregations leading vital, dedicated, and useful lives.

Our congregations are self-governing. Authority and responsibility are vested in the membership of the congregation. Each local congregation, called a church, society, or fellowship, adopts its own bylaws, elects its own officers, and approves its budget. Every member is encouraged to take part in church or fellowship activities.

We Unite

More than one thousand [congregations](#) make up the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA), which represents our interests on a continental scale.

The UUA grew out of the consolidation, in 1961, of two religious denominations, the Universalists, organized in 1793, and the Unitarians, organized in 1825. (See the [UU Historical Society](#))

The UUA provides resources and offers consultations to local congregations, creates religious education curricula, spurs social action efforts, expedites the settlement of professional religious leaders, supports [Beacon Press](#), and produces pamphlets, devotional materials, and the bimonthly journal the [UU World](#).

The UUA works in concert with many other Unitarian Universalist organizations, the largest of which is the [Unitarian Universalist Service Committee](#) (UUSC). Since its early work aiding victims of Nazi oppression, the UUSC has been helping people help themselves through service and advocacy programs around the world. The Unitarian Universalist Women's Federation, an independent membership organization, represents,

organizes, and acts on the concerns and issues of importance to UU women across the continent. Another related organization is the Unitarian Universalist [Church of the Larger Fellowship](#), which provides a ministry to geographically isolated religious liberals.

Get to know us

The best way is to come, see, think, and explore with us. A warm welcome awaits you. [Find a UU Congregation near you.](#)

Marta Flanagan graduated from Smith College and received her master of divinity from Harvard Divinity School. She is co-minister at the Unitarian Universalist Church of Portsmouth, New Hampshire.

Purchase paper copies of this UUA Pamphlet Commission Publication from the [UUA Bookstore](#) for distribution or display.